Sandhu-Ray: No Stunt, Preacher Says

By STAN DELOZIER
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Dr. James Lawson, the Methodist minister who says he will marry James Earl Ray and Anna Sandhu, says he will do it "because that's what Martin Luther King would do."

Dr. Lawson, who was pastor of Centenary Methodist Church in Memphis when Dr. King was shot to death in 1968, is now minister of a church in Los Angeles.

"Yes, I agreed to marry them." Dr. Lawson said Friday by telephone. "I think that's exactly what my good friend Martin Luther King would do if he could come back. He would do it even if James Earl Ray is guilty of killing him."

Dr. Lawson said he belives that Ray, who is serving a 99-year prison term in Brushy Mountain State Prison for the murder of Dr. King, is innocent.

"I visited with him this past summer," Dr. Lawson said. "I didn't get the vibes of a racist, and I've been among a few in my life."

Further, Dr. Lawson said he believes that Ray's confession was made under duress, that the Memphis police coerced the confession from him. He said it was never proved to him "beyond a shadow of a doubt" that Ray shot Dr. King.

"The evidence presented never put Ray in the bathroom at the boarding house where the FBI says the fatal shot came from," he said. "They never even put the bullet that struck King in the gun that Ray supposedly had. In addition, there has never been any kind of motive explained."

Dr. Lawson said he has followed the Ray case closely and that he met him and Miss Sandhu earlier this year at Brushy Mountain. He accompanied Rev. Jesse Jackson to the prison in July to talk with Ray.

"That's when I met Anna Sandhu," Dr. Lawson said. "And then I saw her in Washington again in August at the congressional hearings. I had lunch with her a couple of times and on other occasions I talked with her at some length."

Dr. Lawson said there is not a chance that the announcement of the marriage is a publicity stunt.

"They are sincere," he said. "There's not a doubt in my mind. It was clear to me when I talked with Anna that there is a very deep feeling in her for James Earl Ray."

Dr. Lawson also pointed out that Miss Sandhu was in Washington and had accompanied Ray to the hearings at his request.

"She called me Tuesday night and asked if I would marry them," he said.